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to the more elaborate processes which we are aware of carrying out, we find need of elements which it does not seem necessary to assume in order to account for the responses of an amoeba; (c) that "response to stimulation," as we ourselves experience it, often involves something that may be called, in some sense, awareness of the stimulus, and thus lands us with the problem of perception and even of memory.

I have only one more subject to discuss, namely the subject. It is surprising to find Dr. Schiller sticking up for the old-fashioned soul, and quoting with disapproval the remarks about the ghost of the subject, which once was the full-blooded soul, which I adapted from William James.<sup>1</sup> He does not apparently notice that the remark to which he objects is a paraphrase of James's, but his attitude shows that he is less in agreement with James than is commonly supposed. The background of their thoughts is very different. James's mind was a battle-ground of medical materialism and the mysticism suggested by Swedenborg. His learned self was scientific and his emotional self cosmic; neither led him to attach great value to the ego. On the other hand, Dr. Schiller's learned self is primarily hellenic. He is fond of claiming affinity with Protagoras, who would hardly have suited James. Idealism is to him what James called a "live option"; at one time he collaborated in a work called *Personal Idealism*. It seems to follow that the parts of James's work with which I sympathize most are those with which he sympathizes least. This case of the soul is one of them. On this question I can safely leave the argument to James's American successors, from whom I have learnt many of the doctrines advocated in *The Analysis of Mind*.

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## CRITICAL REALISM AND THE EXTERNAL WORLD<sup>1</sup>

*ESSAYS in Critical Realism* is offered as a new solution of an old epistemological problem. Its authors, a group of philosophers who differ on many important metaphysical points, have here united upon certain matters connected with a theory of knowledge. This theory of knowledge, it is hoped, will enable us all to satisfy our natural cravings to be realists. "An honest man . . . is a realist at heart."<sup>2</sup> It is maintained that, if non-realistic phi-

<sup>1</sup> See the quotation from him in *Analysis of Mind*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Read at the meeting of the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association, at Lincoln, April 14, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> P. 184 (Mr. Santayana). Unless otherwise stated the references are to *Essays in Critical Realism*. The name of the author quoted will in each case be noted.

losophies have dominated the thinking of many persons during the last century, the trouble has been that realism has not known how properly to present its claim. The central issue of the new co-operative volume is our ability to know the external world. Hence by its success in meeting this issue, critical realism must primarily be judged. That the volume has many good features and some attractive sections, no fair critic could deny. The entire volume emphasizes ably the ideal reference in all thinking, the operation of the mind in terms of logical essences which can not be explained as sensational or imaginal. Without such essences or meanings reflection could not go on. Historically, most realisms have wholly neglected these essences, and have thus in this respect been greatly improved upon and perhaps superseded by critical realism. But it is with the argument for an external world that critical realism aims first of all to deal. The importance and the value of the volume depend fundamentally upon the soundness of this argument.

The term critical realism was chosen with a definite meaning in mind. The new philosophy is a realism because it believes we can know extra-mental realities; it is critical because it distinguishes these objects from the immediate content of the mind. A clear statement of the position of critical realism is given in the following passage: "Knowledge is just the insight into the nature of the object that is made possible by the contents which reflect it in consciousness."<sup>3</sup> The external objects "assist in the rise in the organism of subjective data which are the raw material of knowledge,"<sup>4</sup> but yet can themselves "be known only in terms of the data which they control within us."<sup>5</sup> Unless external objects were really existent, the psychical content would not arise in the mind. Unless psychical content were present to mind, we would not know objects. Yet we know the external objects, not the psychical states, even though we know those objects through the instrumentality of the psychical states. The subjective content is the *terminus a quo*, not the *terminus ad quem*, of knowledge.

This position of the critical realists is subject to misunderstanding by a careless reader; for a rather common supposition has been that the object immediately present to consciousness must also be the object known. Not so, however, with the critical realists. "What we perceive, conceive, remember, think of, is the outer object itself,"<sup>6</sup> an object independent of the processes of knowledge and of

<sup>3</sup> P. 200 (Mr. Sellars).

<sup>4</sup> P. 192 (Mr. Sellars).

<sup>5</sup> P. 217 (Mr. Sellars).

<sup>6</sup> P. 4 (Mr. Drake).

the effects which it may chance to produce in consciousness. Yet we never come into contact with that object directly. "We have no power of penetrating to the object itself and intuiting it immediately,"<sup>7</sup> but have immediately present to us only subjective content. "The knower is confined to the datum, and can never literally inspect the existent which he affirms and claims to know."<sup>8</sup> In other words the object of perception and the content of perception are two separate things, the former being objective and the latter subjective; and though the latter is caused by the former and the former is known by means of the latter, "their existence is quite distinct and their conditions entirely different."<sup>9</sup> As the position is beautifully summed up in one passage: "The objects themselves, *i.e.*, those bits of *existence*, do not get within our consciousness. Their existence is their own affair, private, incommunicable. One existent (my organism, or mind) can not go out beyond itself literally, and include another existent; between us all, existentially speaking, is 'the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.'"<sup>10</sup>

Thus incompletely stated, critical realism recalls Locke's *Essay*. In spite of the disregard which some of the critical realists feel for their seventeenth-century ancestor, there are strong resemblances. Yet there are important differences too, which call for notice. Sometimes, to be sure, Locke gave up all hope of knowing the real, outer object; he regarded it almost as unknowable as Kant later regarded his *Ding an sich*, and confined human knowledge to relations between the ideas or bits of subjective content. This the critical realists never do. But at other times Locke, just as much as the critical realists, regarded the ideas, not as the objects to which knowledge was directed, but as the means by which knowledge was mediated of real, outer, external objects. He then speaks of knowledge of "real existence." And with great emphasis he says: "If our knowledge of our ideas terminate in them, and reach no farther, where there is something farther intended, our most serious thought will be of little more use than the reveries of a crazy brain; and the truths built thereon of no more weight than the discourses of a man who sees things clearly in a dream, and with great assurance utters them."<sup>11</sup> Yet even with this second and more realistic strain in Locke, the critical realists believe themselves not in agreement. In many passages surely, Locke, no more than the critical realists, took the immediate content of mind as the objects of knowl-

<sup>7</sup> P. 225 (Mr. Strong).

<sup>8</sup> P. 203 (Mr. Sellars).

<sup>9</sup> P. 165 (Mr. Santayana).

<sup>10</sup> P. 24 (Mr. Drake).

<sup>11</sup> Locke: *Essay Concerning the Human Understanding*, Bk IV, chap. 4, §. 2.

edge. But it is true that Locke did not distinguish, and that the critical realists do distinguish, between mental contents and data. And it is because of Locke's failure to take the data, the logical essences, into account, that he is deemed unsatisfactory and outworn. The critical realists contend that along with the subjective content there also are disclosed certain essences, which can not be taken as giving merely the *whatness* of the subjective content, but which do give the *whatness* of the external objects (except where the mind is in error). Hence it is maintained that through the essences we can bridge the estranging sea and can know the world as it really is constituted in itself. Even if we do not have objects existentially present within consciousness, we reach those objects by "a logical, essential, virtual grasp" of the mind.<sup>12</sup> We are thus enabled to affirm objects.

The central issue in the new theory of knowledge given by the critical realists boils down to the question whether the recognition of the data or essences enables us to know external objects, whether the critical realists are better off than Locke or any one who tried to infer external objects from the subjective content alone. If the historical types of realism upon a foundation of epistemological dualism can not bridge the gap between mind and object, what assistance can be derived from the affirmation of essences? The contention of the present paper is that the critical realists face exactly the same difficulty as that which they confess was present in older realisms. Even if the critical realists give a better analysis of what thinking is, they are no whit better off in getting from the thinking mind to the external world.

The premises of critical realism rule out the possibility of knowledge in the sense in which they desire it. Knowledge is "true opinion with reason"; and "an opinion is true if what it is talking about is constituted as the opinion asserts it to be constituted."<sup>13</sup> Or, in other words, knowledge is a matter of "correspondence or conformity of the knowledge-content with the selected object."<sup>14</sup> But if we grant the premises of critical realism, how can we ever be sure that our opinions are true? How can we hence have knowledge? If real objects are not present directly to the mind, if the mind has "no power of penetrating to the object itself," how can we be sure that the propositions in which we express our opinions conform to objects beyond? What test is there for truth? One

<sup>12</sup> P. 28 (Mr. Drake).

<sup>13</sup> Pp. 98, 99 (Mr. Pratt). Quoted by Mr. Pratt from Mr. Santayana.

<sup>14</sup> Sellars: *Evolutionary Naturalism*, p. 55. Though quoted from Mr. Sellars's last book rather than from the coöperative volume, it may fairly be assumed that he speaks for the rest of the critical realists on this point.

might suppose, were it not for Mr. Lovejoy's excessive fury with pragmatism, that the predicament of the critical realists would make them glad to accept workability as an alternative for the older meaning of truth; yet the critical realists all agree in rejecting the pragmatic point of view. By their own theory of the un-get-at-ability of objects, the critical realists have eliminated any chance of proving that the essences we have in mind are the correct *what-ness* of the external objects. Truth being conformity of an essence to an object we can by hypothesis never reach, knowledge is impossible.

The fault with critical realism is not that it does not allow for the occurrence of error, but that it does not permit us to know when we have the truth and when we are in error. It may well be that the data or essences "are irresistibly taken to be the characters of the existents perceived, or otherwise known."<sup>15</sup> If this were granted, it could still be asked how we know when they are correctly so taken and when incorrectly. It is not enough to confess that "there is always a bare possibility of illusion or hallucination";<sup>16</sup> rather there is no possibility of distinguishing between hallucination and veridical perception at all. We are told that "experience indicates an actual, causally based agreement between the physical existent and the content of perception."<sup>17</sup> But how can experience of the subjective sort postulated by the critical realists ever indicate whether we are justified in predicating essences of external objects? How can we say that agreement is indicated if one of the things between which agreement is asserted is inaccessible? We are told that in dealing with subjective content and external object "the tendency of the realist is to reply that the similarity is great, and may even rise to identity of essence."<sup>18</sup> But what difference would truth and error have to us if we could not tell which was which, if we could not tell when there is identity and when not? It is maintained that the mind may "rest directly on the object" in cases of knowledge since the essence is universal and so can be both in the mind and in the object, and that only in cases of error is there dualism between the essence in the mind and the essence of the object.<sup>19</sup> But how can we know when our minds are resting on objects, since the objects are not present to the mind except in so far as their essence is present? The essence is present to the mind in case of error just as

<sup>15</sup> P. 5 (Mr. Drake).

<sup>16</sup> P. 32 (Mr. Drake).

<sup>17</sup> P. 202 (Mr. Sellars).

<sup>18</sup> P. 165 (Mr. Santayana).

<sup>19</sup> P. 202 (Mr. Sellars).

clearly as in the case of true opinion; and determination of truth and error, if not definition of their abstract meaning, is impossible to one shut up to the content of his own mind. Critical realism, though not denying the possibility of true opinion and also of error, does prevent us from distinguishing between them in every case except where for some special purpose we choose to make the subjective content or the essences themselves the object of our inquiries. Those essences would give us true opinion which contain or conform to the "structure, position, and changes" of objects;<sup>20</sup> but essences which give us wrong opinions about the structure, position, and changes of objects might often be accepted as irresistibly as those which give us true opinions thereof. To a critical realist a satisfactory essence would have to be one which was internally useful, not one which was objectively true.

One should not be confused, and some of the critical realists seem to be confused, by the discovery that in perception or any other consciousness we affirm an object. Affirmation does not constitute proof. We may affirm objects constantly without proving a single one to be as we affirm it, or even to be in existence at all. One of the critical realists draws a distinction between inferring an object and affirming an object, and maintains that we do not infer, but only affirm.<sup>21</sup> That is the very trouble. There is no basis for inference,—or rather there is no check upon inference; there is only affirmation, made earnestly, upheld enthusiastically, followed persistently. But it is sheer affirmation. It is sheer dogmatism. It is an exhibition of the sort of enthusiasm which Locke so effectively opposed in his *Essay*, Book IV, chapter 19, a chapter from which we may learn much still. After saying that there are "two elements in perception, *the affirmation of a co-real and the assigned set of characters or aspects*," it is concluded that "the content is intuited, the object is reacted to and affirmed."<sup>22</sup> The last phrase is ambiguous. It should mean just what the first phrase meant, namely that there is an affirmation of an object. It implies to a hasty reader that it has been found that there is an object really there which is reacted to and affirmed. Such a conclusion would doubtless be welcome, but can not be derived from the premises. Yet it seems that the distinction between these two meanings is not understood in the essay from which the quotation is made. Others of the critical realists do take account of this distinction, with the result that they are much readier to grant the danger of total skepticism. It is even acknowledged that the external

<sup>20</sup> P. 200 (Mr. Sellars).

<sup>21</sup> P. 195 (Mr. Sellars).

<sup>22</sup> P. 196 (Mr. Sellars).

objects may be the physical entities of the physicist, the other centers of consciousness of the panpsychist, or some such reality as might be defined by an ontological idealist.<sup>23</sup> But most of the critical realists have not the intellectual bravery to confess that there *may* be no external objects at all. Not simply can not we reach the external objects to check up on our opinions as to their nature, but we can not even get outside the mind to find if there are objects there. Perhaps nothing exists beyond the subjective contents and the essences. We may be affirming essences in an ontological vacuum.

The problem of knowledge raises the question of transcendence which is occasionally treated, but in different ways, by the different critical realists. Contradictions within critical realism here emerge according to the willingness of the various authors to grant the full implications of their premises. On the one hand it is said: "Knowledge of the existents affirmed requires no more transcendence than does this affirmation."<sup>24</sup> In one sense this proposition is true but altogether useless to a consistent critical realist; in another sense it would be a valuable aid but is false. The former sense would be that to know an existent (or external object) no further transcendence is required than is involved in checking up, or following through to its destination, the affirmation of the existent. The latter sense would be that to know an existent no further transcendence is required than to affirm it. Those two senses of the original proposition have been repeatedly confused in some essays of the volume. The former sense of the proposition, though true, would not do away with the necessity of getting beyond subjective contents and the affirmation of an essence to the external world, a necessity which runs counter to the premises of critical realism. The latter sense of the proposition, though it would enable us to prove whatever we wanted by affirming it, is false in identifying proof with convinced and obstinate affirmation. On the other hand it is said: "*Minds* have this characteristic of meaning more than they directly experience. . . . Hence the critical realist simply writes down transcendence as one of the facts of the world, just as the physicist writes down X-rays as a special sort of fact."<sup>25</sup> Here it is correctly realized that, if we are to have knowledge instead of opinions which are not checked up, we must have transcendence.

<sup>23</sup> P. 109 (Mr. Pratt). Since Mr. Pratt comes to this conclusion, one wonders why he speaks so pityingly of *der gute Berkeley* and "the weakness of Berkeley's subjectivism," p. 87. Why are not ideas in the mind of God as adequate an external world as anything else?

<sup>24</sup> P. 212 (Mr. Sellars).

<sup>25</sup> P. 99 (Mr. Pratt).



But on the premises of critical realism which exclude the possibility of penetrating to the real objects, should it not be frankly confessed that knowledge is impossible?<sup>26</sup> Critical realism can not lead to any other outcome if it retains its view that objects are inaccessible, unless it should decide that knowledge is what one determines to believe in the absence of all proof on the basis of some deep-seated prejudice or what one finds convenient to accept on the basis that it leads to happy issue. In perhaps the most illuminating passage in the collection of essays, Mr. Santayana shows that the validity of knowledge requires that we regard it as *transitive* and *relevant*.<sup>27</sup> But it does no good to insist on transitivity and then to deny the possibility of getting to the object with reference to which knowledge is relevant.

The validity of this critique of critical realism is even more apparent when the illustrations are examined in which the existence of external objects is supposed to be established. Space does not permit a detailed examination here of more than one typical case. It is said that we must believe in external objects because we can perceive another individual perceiving an object, we can see "the focusing of the eyes, the tension of the head, the directive set of the whole body, all leading usually to behaviour toward the object."<sup>28</sup> Do the premises of the critical realism permit us to say that we see these facts? On the basis of a philosophy which did not make the immediate content of perception "subjective," such an inference of another object would be justifiable.<sup>29</sup> But a critical realist could say only that what he calls the other individual and his adjustments are certain subjective content and certain essences in his mind. He should not assume the objective reality of the other individual's body in order through it to prove the objective reality of the object towards which the other individual is reacting. He can be sure only that he has certain subjective contents and thinks of certain essences, and nothing more. He has no check on the truth of the essences until he gets into contact with an external object; and he can not get into contact with an external object until he has some check on the truth of the essences. He must,

<sup>26</sup> In *Evolutionary Naturalism*, p. 49, Mr. Sellars defines knowledge as "a claim and content within experience concerning existences, outside of experience, mentally selected as objects." It is amazing that this definition can be seriously put forward in a book which operates on the basis of critical realism.

<sup>27</sup> P. 68 (Mr. Santayana).

<sup>28</sup> P. 196 (Mr. Sellars).

<sup>29</sup> I personally regard such an inference as justifiable on the basis of the theory explained in my article in this JOURNAL, March 30, 1922, Vol. XIX, No. 7, pp. 169 ff.

therefore, either confess to arguing in a circle or give up any claim to knowledge of a world without himself.<sup>30</sup>

The critical realists do not all affirm the external world with the same assurance. The most confident of the group is undoubtedly Mr. Sellars. He objects to Lockian realism because it teaches that "we first know our ideas as objects and then postulate physical realities."<sup>31</sup> He asserts against Locke that we know physical realities "from the first." The contention is plausible but hides a serious confusion. What is meant by knowing physical objects *from the first*? If it means that from the beginning of our experience we have subjective contents and essences which lead us to affirm external objects, there is nothing inconsistent with the premises of critical realism. But neither is there anything to prove physical objects to be really there: the affirmations may all be mistaken. If, however, the phrase means that we have greater assurance of the existence of physical objects than of subjective contents, we would have a sound basis for realism and no need for an elaborate proof of the external world. But this would be equivalent to maintaining direct contact of minds with external objects and hence to giving up critical realism. The plausibility of the passage about knowing physical objects *from the first* is derived from a confusion between the first and second meanings of the phrase. Locke could say that we know external objects from the first in exactly the same sense in which Mr. Sellars' premises would permit him to say it; namely, that from the beginning of experience we have such mental contents that we come to suppose a real and objective world. Even if the addition of essences to subjective contents is taken to improve upon Locke's account of the contents of consciousness, it in no way alters the nature of the jump from mind to object.

Others of the critical realists realize better than Mr. Sellars the difficulty here. It is said that the existence of an external world is a matter of an *as if*, and consolation is found in the fact that critical realism is no worse off than subjectivism which believes in other minds.<sup>32</sup> Only two of the authors in the volume give evidence of following their premises to the logical conclusion. Mr. Pratt confesses that on the premises of critical realism "the ultimate nature of reality in itself may be very difficult, or even impossible, to discover,"<sup>33</sup> though he none the less proceeds to deprecate agnosticism in his closing pages. Mr. Santayana goes in thoroughness

<sup>30</sup> Cf. also pp. 22-24, 29, 169-170, *et passim*. Cf. further Sellars: *Evolutionary Naturalism*, pp. 30, 32, 40.

<sup>31</sup> P. 193 (Mr. Sellars).

<sup>32</sup> P. 6 (Mr. Drake).

<sup>33</sup> P. 104 (Mr. Pratt).

beyond Mr. Pratt. He grants that the subjective content "might have arisen without any occasion, as idealists believe is actually the case,"<sup>34</sup> and reduces the passage from the essence in thought to the existing object to a moral basis, "the leap of faith and action,"<sup>35</sup> a phrase strangely reminiscent of Kant's practical reason. The consistent logic of the premise that we intuit only subjective contents thus proves to be that realism is possible to those who want to assume it. But so is ontological idealism or any other metaphysics. So even is skepticism. Denial of all external reality would be no more of a hazard of faith than affirmation of an external reality. Perhaps we are "realists at heart."<sup>36</sup> But it would seem to be more honest to confess that we had no valid reason for believing what we want to profess. Realism of the "critical" type thus proves to be a matter of preference, of personal prejudice or choice, not of the logic of the premises.<sup>37</sup>

Cæsar had his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell, and Locke his Hume. The critical realists should have gone on more often from their Locke to their Hume, in order better to appreciate the force of Hume's disintegrating criticism. Any one could apply to critical realism the epistemological reflection which Hume brought to bear on the Lockian tradition which assumed that the immediate content of the mind is "subjective." He wrote: "As to those impressions which arise from the senses, their ultimate cause is, in my opinion, perfectly inexplicable by human reason, and 'twill always be impossible to decide with certainty, whether they arise immediately from the object, or are produced by the creative power of the mind, or are deriv'd from the author of our being."<sup>38</sup> Taking into account the supposition of critical realism that the discovery of the essences relates us to extra-mental realities, any one instructed by Hume might say: As to those essences which come before the mind, their ultimate conformity to reality is per-

<sup>34</sup> Pp. 166-167 (Mr. Santayana).

<sup>35</sup> P. 183 (Mr. Santayana).

<sup>36</sup> P. 184 (Mr. Santayana).

<sup>37</sup> Mr. Santayana's essay amounts to showing that though the external world can not be proved it may be assumed with success. But it is not an external world apart from experience that he is usually talking about. He seems to be showing rather that we can take the world immediately present to sense as the real world. This is quite a different position than that of the other realists of this group. Even that, however, is not satisfactory. It seems rather to be true that the world is given as real and that all distinctions we discover, as that between mind and object, are made within this real world. Mr. Santayana regrettably has not escaped the subjective elements of the British tradition which mar his otherwise brilliant volume on *Reason in Common Sense*.

<sup>38</sup> *Treatise of Human Nature*, edition of Green and Grose, Vol. I, p. 385.

fectly unknowable by a mind which has no direct contact with reality; and it will always be impossible to decide with certainty whether they correspond to external objects or are convenient fictions for the practical, but not the theoretical, concerns of life.

A candid examination by the critical realists of the divergences in the views expressed in the coöperative volume might well correct the inadequacies of the theory. Those who are nearest to Locke are the most consistent in the development of their premises; and those who are most determined to be realists have the greatest trouble with the Lockian axiom of having only mental contents as immediate objects of the mind. In other words, if the group of writers here under review remain "critical" in their sense of the word as denying the direct contact of the mind with extra-mental objects, they have no logical basis for their realism; and if they wish to be realists with assurance, they have to cease to be consistently "critical." As it is, their realism should be called hypothetical or preferential or transcendental. But if they discard the assumption that the mind does not come into direct contact with external objects, realism would not have to be proved, and criticism might become more relevant to human concerns.

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### "RELATIVITY, OLD AND NEW"

I SHOULD like to comment briefly on Professor Wadman's article so far as it is concerned with "objections" to my own remarks.<sup>1</sup> It seems to me that he has failed to appreciate my aim, and his criticisms are therefore almost wholly irrelevant. Had I been dealing with *the* aspects of relativity, they might be justified. But I confined myself to *some* aspects, while Professor Wadman treats of points which I deliberately omitted. My purpose was to insist that the theory has no direct bearing on the relativity of knowledge, or the subjectivity of time and space (p. 210). Everyone is familiar with the extreme views which have been advanced on these subjects; and from that standpoint it still remains true that "the philosophic problems of objective reality"—as such and in general—remain unaffected by recent developments; so far as they are concerned, the theory is a "benevolent neutral." That "objective reality is profoundly changed by the theory" (W., p. 206) is obviously true; and so far as our conceptual handling of

<sup>1</sup> This JOURNAL, Vol. XVIII, No. 8; XIX, No. 8. To avoid confusion in reference, I distinguish Professor Wadman's pages by W.